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The Christian's duty in the present crisis.

Cincinnati, 1861.

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THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY IN THE PRESENT CRISIS.

BY BISHOP M'ILVAINE.

WAR is upon us—the worst, the most horrid, the most calamitous and sorrowful of all wars; not only *civil* war, but civil war in circumstances beyond precedent, painful and productive of all the bitterest passions of man's evil nature. The cloud is exceeding dark. But it reaches not to heaven. God's light is behind it, however hid. His ways, however unsearchable, and "a great deep" to our eye, are in wisdom and goodness—and still "God is our Refuge, and a very present help in trouble." But what is *our* duty? I mean the duty of disciples of Christ—ours *as members of Christ's Church*, having brethren in Christ everywhere—in the States now in array against us, and even in the army now perhaps on the march against us?

First.—Our duty is clearly, solemnly, steadily, patiently, bravely, earnestly, to sustain our Government. There is no room for hesitation here. Whatever may be said of persons or localities, or sections of people, our Government has not provoked this war —the *country* has not. We are *pro patria*, for our beloved country—not Ohio, not this State or that; not North, or East, or West, but our country; and our Government as the only representative of our country. All duty says so. And what we are and do in the discharge of this duty should be zealous, devoted, self-sacrificing, undaunted.

But *secondly.*—In what spirit as Christians? There is no necessity of coming down in the least from all that pertains to Christian spirit in the discharge of such duty, wherever it may carry us. Good soldiers, especially soldiers standing for their homes and institutions, repelling invasion, encircling around their Government, contending for the Union, have no need to borrow a spirit not their own. There need be no unhallowed passions, no spirit of

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bitter revenge, no cultivation of hate, no ceasing to pray for enemies, no passing away of actual kindness and readiness to do good to those arrayed against us, whenever *duty*, *loyalty*, to our own cause does not prevent. Especially with those who stay at home and do not plunge into the actual conflict—the great mass of praying, loving, Christian people—the highest measure of loyalty and of stern determination to sustain the Government, is perfectly consistent with the cherishing in their hearts of all the tempers and spirit—the charities, the kindness, the doing good to them that may hate us—the praying for those who would "despitefully use us," which our blessed Gospel requires.

Under these general views, what is duty?

1st. Let us keep our hearts with all diligence—with special effort to prevent the encroachment of a war-feeling and excitement upon the proper domain of the Spirit of God within you. The danger is great. These strong excitements carry away the mind as with a flood. They overwhelm us, unless our dykes be well kept. Duty to God—the duty of a devotional mind—the duty of prayer, secret, and daily, and regular, and spiritual remains. Eternity is only the nearer. God's blessing and favor are only, if possible, the more needful. The more exciting the crisis, the more the need of God. If we want an army in the field with carnal weapons, we want also, and for the same cause, an army at the throne of grace—taking hold, by constant prayer, on the arm of the only real strength. In *that* army—while the other is composed only of those between certain ages, and it must exclude the aged, the feeble—in *that* army all can be marshaled—the praying child, the praying woman, the heart on a sick bed, tottering age—all can contend in that, and make a great and mighty host before God, holding up the hands of those who go to the battle, praying for the blessings of peace, union, stability, and brotherly love. Let us keep our hearts with all diligence, that we may thus keep ourselves at the throne of grace. Never were praying people more needed in our country than now.

2d. Let us watch against the growth in our hearts of all bitterness of spirit against those whom we must now call—most painful as it is—our enemies. Many there are whom we must thus place under that name, who are enemies to us only because their cause is against ours, while the bonds of Christian charity and real brotherly love of Christian brethren towards us are not broken. I believe that most truly. So it is, and must be, among us towards

them. It is awful to be thus arrayed, brother against brother. No greater affliction could come. It must not be made more awful, as far as religious people can help it, by the kindling of fires of evil passion, which the cause on neither side demands. and by which any cause must be disgraced. Let us stand by the right—but *righteously*—in the right mind—in the spirit of those whose rule of mind is the word of God, and who desire to "approve themselves unto God," and to have his blessing.

3d. Let us still seek peace, and the measures that make for peace. The President seeks peace, and has done nothing inconsistent with his profession of a pacific spirit and aim. Let *us* seek it also, and while preparing for war, still cherish the hope and the spirit of peace. We may not see the way by which, consistently with that we ought to maintain, peace can *now* be restored. But let us remember that *we see* but little of the ways and power of God. Our hope of peace is not destroyed because our eyes cannot detect its path, or our Chief Magistrate and his Counselors cannot devise the means of obtaining it. The Lord reigneth. God is our Refuge. "He hath his way in the sea and his path in the mighty waters." When the disciples of Christ were on the billows, tempest tossed, they knew not any path on those waves by which their Master could reach them. It was "*the fourth watch of the night.*" But he had a path in the sea, and they saw him walking therein, and the waves were still. If there be no way of peace, God can make one by dividing the sea. We are not hopeless of peace, because we cannot tell how it could be brought about. Let us still hope. and still pray. With arms in hand let us do so. God be with us! God preserve and guide our Counselors, our Governors, our President! May they all learn humbly to feel and acknowledge their dependence on him for wisdom and strength. May the godlessness which has too long disgraced our public counsels and affairs be cast away. May our President seek his help in God, and his Cabinet ask wisdom where only it is to be found. and our Legislatures know that God's blessing is worth their seeking.

CHAS. P. MCILVAINE.

Cincinnati, April 19, 1861.

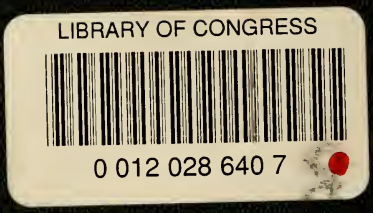
PRAYERS BY THE RT. REV. ALONZO POTTER.

PRAYER DURING OUR PRESENT NATIONAL TROUBLES.

O Almighty God, who art a strong tower of defence to those who put their trust in thee, whose power no creature is able to resist, we make our humble cry to thee in this hour of our country's need. Thy property is always to have mercy. Deal not with us according to our sins, neither reward us according to our iniquities; but stretch forth the right hand of thy Majesty, and be our defence for thy name's sake. Have pity upon our brethren who are in arms against the constituted authorities of the land, and show them the error of their way. Shed upon the counsels of our Rulers the spirit of wisdom and moderation and firmness, and unite the hearts of our people as the heart of one man in upholding the supremacy of Law, and the cause of justice and peace. Abate the violence of passion; banish pride and prejudice from every heart, and incline us all to trust in thy righteous Providence, and to be ready for every duty. And oh, that in thy great mercy, thou wouldst hasten the return of unity and concord to our borders, and so order all things that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us for all generations. These things, and whatever else thou shalt see to be necessary and convenient for us, we humbly beg through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

PRAYER FOR THOSE EXPOSED TO DANGER.

Almighty God, the Saviour of all men we humbly commend to thy tender care and sure protection, thy servants who have gone forth at the call of their country, to defend its government and to protect us in our property and homes. Let thy fatherly hand, we beseech thee, be over them; let thy Holy Spirit be with them; let thy good Angels have charge of them; with thy loving kindness defend them as with a shield, and either bring them out of their peril in safety, with a heart to show forth thy praises for ever, or else sustain them with that glorious hope, by which alone thy servants can have victory in suffering and death; through the sole merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*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